

NEERGABBY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

JUNCTION BRIDGE CONSERVATION PLAN



JUNE 2003

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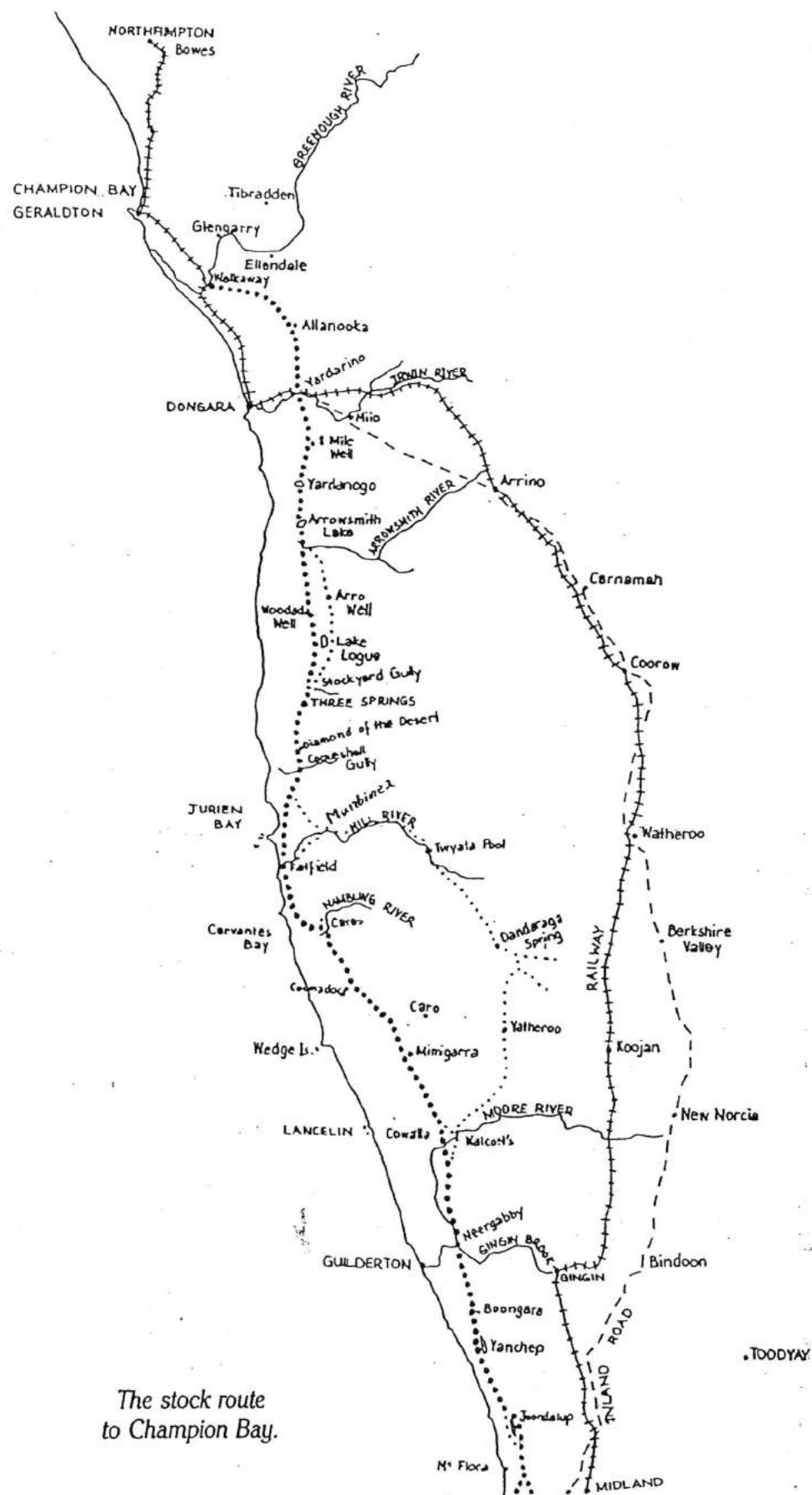


FIGURE 2- Location Plan The Northwest Stock Route

2. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

The original Junction Bridge over Gingin Brook is a six span timber structure 68 feet in length (Plans Appendix 1).

As previously outlined half caps and corbels were introduced to the bridge in 1909 and there has been minimal change to the Bridge since then, as indicated by the attached photographs.

The Bridge has timber handrails with an 11 foot 10 inch clearance between the handrails (Photograph 1).

Each pier consists of three 18 inch diameter rounded timber piles braced with 140 x 100 inch sawn timbers bolted to the piles (Photograph 2).

The horizontal timber half caps bolted across the tops of the piles consist of 12 x 6 inch sawn timbers.

The stringers consist of 12 x 6 inch corbels bolted to the crossheads (Photograph 3).

The decking consists of 8 x 3 inch timbers supporting a gravel topping retained at the side by 5 x 3½ inch longitudinal timbers bolted to the decking (Photograph 4).

The timber handrails are constructed from 6 x 4 inch timbers 4 feet in height supporting top rails of 4 x 4 inch sawn timbers on edge with a 4 x 3 inch timber mid height rails.

The first pier from the western abutment has moved downstream due to failure of the bracing resulting in the collapse of the first and second spans supported from this pier (Photograph 5).

The hand-railing has nearly all collapsed, and the decking decayed (Photograph 4).

The attached recent photographs depict the current condition of the Bridge which at present cannot be used.

Stock fencing at either end prevents access.

The Bridge can be restored for future utilisation as a footbridge.

Adjacent to the western end of the bridge is a well established parking area with seats and tables and a well presented information display depicting the history of the area and the significance of the Bridge as a component of the Old North Road and Stock Route.

Further to the east is the restored historic Junction Hotel which can be seen in photographs and depicted in Figure 3.

Although in need of urgent repair the Bridge is essentially complete as a rare example of bridge construction in the period of the 1860's to 1909.

3. ANALYSIS OF DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

The pier structure is part of the original 1863 structure of the Bridge.

Although the deck planking of the Bridge was repaired and replaced subsequent to 1863, the 1909 repair work resulted in the use of half caps and corbels at each of the Bridge piers demonstrating the standard Public Work Practice in use at that time and there has been minimal change to the Bridge structure since that time other than the usual timber repair work.

The Bridge as part of the Stock Route to Champion Bay formed one of the key river crossings in the Gingin district (the other being over the Moore River at Cowalla) forming the main lifeline for the pastoral stations to the north which rapidly expanded commencing circa 1850.

The Bridge withstood the districts worst recorded floods in 1872 and during the 1870's and 1880's and continued to perform the key function of a river crossing until replaced by a replacement bridge constructed in 1958.

In the 1860's convict bridge building under the supervision of Royal Engineer officers was being phased out and roadworks in country areas was poorly organised until local road boards were set up under the Road Board Act enacted in 1871, hence the part played by W. Padbury and other landholders in establishing the Stock Route.

The Junction Bridge is one of the oldest surviving timber bridges in Western Australia with the timber piers being the oldest.

The Bridge is a significant component of the heritage of the Old North Road and is covered by a number of Heritage Council of WA themes as follows:

- 104 Land Allocation and Subdivision
- 105 Exploration and Surveying
- 112 Technology and Technological Change
- 203 Road Transport
- 204 Droving
- 206 Mail Services
- 209 Technology and Technological Change
- 301 Grazing and Pastoralism
- 404 Community Services and Utilities
- 501 World Wars

- 602 Early Settlers
- 603 Local Heroes and Battlers
- 605 Famous People

The Bridge is also covered by many Principle Australian Historic Themes:

- 2.2 Adapting to diverse environments
- 2.5 Promoting settlement
- 3.1 Exploring the coastline
- 3.3.2 Looking for overland stock routes
- 3.3.4 Looking for land and agricultural potential
- 3.5.1 Grazing stock
- 3.5.2 Breeding animals
- 3.5.3 Developing agricultural industries
- 3.7.1 Establishing postal services
- 3.8.5 Moving goods and people on land
- 3.8.7 Building and maintaining roads
- 3.9 Farming for commercial profit
- 3.12.2 Developing sources of fresh local produce
- 3.14.2 Using Australian materials for construction
- 3.16.1 Dealing with disasters and hazards
- 3.18.1 Raising capital
- 7.6.1 Developing local government authorities
- 7.7.1 Providing for the common defence
- 7.7.2 Preparing to face invasion

4. ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The route through Neergabby at the junction of the Moore River and Gingin Brook was a focus for the pastoral development of the northern areas as far as Champion Bay and further north, and as such is a key remaining of the Old North Road and Stock Route.

Delays for cattle and travellers during times of high river levels were overcome with the construction of the Junction Bridge over Gingin Brook at Neergabby in 1863 this remaining in service as the main crossing until 1958 and continuing to serve as a viable crossing for local use many years afterwards.

Well known earlier "pioneer" settlers such as Walter Padbury, and Robert de Burgh were directly associated with the establishment of the Bridge.

The Bridge remains today and although subject to deterioration, with one pier having collapsed due to lack of maintenance of the pier bracing, the bridge depicts the technology prevailing at the time of its original construction and is largely intact.

Although replacement of timber components has occurred the replacements are all sawn section similar to the original ones. A large proportion of the piers consist of the original piles and as such are the oldest timber bridge piles remaining in a timber bridge in Western Australia.

The Bridge remains in position due to the replacement bridge in 1958 (Appendix 2) being constructed on a new alignment downstream, resulting in the original Bridge not having to be demolished at the time.

The Junction Bridge is historically important as a key river crossing over Gingin Brook providing access to the northern pastoral areas, and is technologically significant as a rare example of bridge construction in the 1860's through to 1900's. The crossing of the river over Junction Bridge at Neergabby created a socially important focal point for the district.

The Bridge piles (1863-64) are the oldest of any bridge in Western Australia, and the Bridge as a whole, is one of the few from the 1800's in the state which is still complete, although no longer in use.

The restoration of the Bridge is strongly supported by the Neergabby Community Association.

5. STATEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Junction Bridge, a six span timber bridge built over Gingin Brook in 1863-64 has cultural heritage significance for the following reasons:

- the place is a rare example of a bridge built in the period after convict bridgeworks and before better engineered bridges were introduced in the 1890's, the Bridge piles (1863-1864) being the oldest on any bridge in Western Australia;
- the place as a whole is one of the few bridges from the 1800's still complete;
- the place is significant with the expansion northwards of the pastoral industry, the meeting of the northern Stock Route, and roads from Gingin (to the east), Cowalla (to the north) and Guilderton (to the west) made the Bridge vicinity a natural meeting place with the establishment of the Junction Hotel, racecourse, cricket ground and hall;
- the place has a close association with significantly important pioneer settlers and their families and is also associated with the explorations of the surveyor, explorer Gregory brothers;
- the place is valued by the local community.